

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are present in the above-captioned application and have been subjected to restriction under 35 U.S.C. § 121. Specifically, the Official Action avers that the following inventions are present in the claims:

Group I, Claims 1-5, drawn to a medical equipment autoclaving system, classified in class 422, subclass 297;

Group II, Claims 6-11 and 18-23, drawn to a medical equipment autoclaving method, classified in class 422, subclass 26; and

Group III, Claims 12-17, drawn to a medical equipment autoclave, classified in class 122, subclass 459.

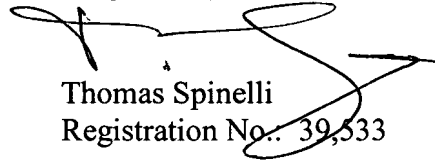
It is the Examiner's position that the inventions listed as Groups I-III are distinct from each other.

In response to the Examiner's requirement for restriction, Applicants elect to prosecute the subject matter of Group I, Claims 1-5. However, Applicant reserves the right under 35 U.S.C. § 121 to file one or more divisional applications directed to the non-elected subject matter in this application.

Furthermore, it is respectfully requested that this Preliminary Amendment be entered in the above-identified application prior to examination. By means of the present Preliminary Amendment, independent claims 1, 6, 12 and 18 have been amended to clarify the same. The dependent claims have also been amended, where necessary, to be consistent with their amended base claim. The amendments to the claims are fully supported in the original disclosure. Thus, no new matter has been entered into the disclosure by way of the present amendment to the claims.

In view of the foregoing, an examination on the merits of the elected claims, at an early date, is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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